

Love & War by Vishbea

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Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Holly Wheeler, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Michael Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Original Female Character(s), Original Male Character(s), Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Dustin Henderson/Original Female Character(s), Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Karen Wheeler/Original Male Character(s), Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Will Byers/Original Male Character(s)

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Summary:

10 years ago Mike Wheeler and El Hopper were supposed to spend the rest of their lives together but things ended badly between them. Now he was CEO of a technology company in Hawkins. Unexpected events happen and then he needs to deal with his past.

Rival CEO AU

1. The Enemy

Author's Note:

Hey! This is my first attempt at a fanfic and I'm really worried and excited at the same time! Just to clarify, English is not my first language so if there are any mistakes I apologise. Hope y'all enjoy!

Mike woke up early that morning. His routine every day was the same. After his morning run he took his breakfast and was ready for another day of work. While he drives through the streets of Hawkins, he realized how much the city had changed. Huge buildings filled the view. People walked fast between shopping malls or honking at each other in their cars. Hawkins was not the same.

Well. He wasn't the same.

He is 26, graduated from NYU with Dustin. So they returned to Hawkins and founded W&H Enterprises. One of the most famous technology companies. They made cell phones, tablets, computers and watches. Dustin was his partner, but he was better at dealing with IT. They work well together.

Dustin had met a girl named Rose in college and since then they were together. Will had graduated in visual arts and became a great painter with exhibitions in several places. He was involved with a man named Tommy who had a prejudiced family and didn't accept the fact that their son was gay.

Lucas became a famous basketball player of the Hawkins Dragons. He has been dating Max since high school and they live together now. Max became a doctor and works at Hawkins General Hospital.

They were still The Party. Group of 5.

6 counting with *HER*.

She. The girl of his dreams. The most beautiful woman he has ever met and who has the kindest soul he has ever known. They had so many good moments and unfortunately broke up in a bad time. He blamed himself for what happened but also he blamed her too. It wasn't he who had started the fight.

He sighed heavily. Anyways, it doesn't matter now.

Jennifer, Mike's assistant was already waiting for him with her smirk smile. "Good morning, Mr. Michael."

"Good Morning Jennifer." He said smiling back. He couldn't help himself at all because he was single and felt very alone. So sometimes they kissed, *more than kisses*, he would say. But she understood that he didn't want to compromise now and it worked. "What is it?"

"Mr. Sanders' secretary has asked to arrange a meeting with other businessmen here. It looks like he wants to sell his company and he wants to meet potential buyers."

Interesting.

Sanders Inc. was a great company, If he could convince them he would become or leader any technology market not only from Hawkins but throughout Indiana. The problem was that he was not the only one interested in that company. There was another. *What's the name again? Brendon, Bryan ... Brenner!* Yeah, Brenner Technologies now had a new CEO. *Woman.* The old one, Martin Brenner had taken a bad path and had lost a lot of money, so no wonder he was being replaced.

But Mike couldn't care less. He would win that company. "Great, mark the meeting for tomorrow, please. Anything else?" He said already sitting at his desk.

"Your mother called and asked you not to forget the special dinner today." *Oh yes, dinner.*

His parents had divorced a few years ago. They argued a lot until his mother had the initiative to separate from his father Ted Wheeler, so now she was married to Roy Danvers. A nice guy who made his

mother happy. *Well* , if she was happy then Mike was too. "Ok, thank you Jennifer."

"It's a pleasure to help you, sir." She came out swinging her hips more than necessary and Mike couldn't help himself.

"Dude, are you still having an affair with the secretary?" Dustin said taking Mike's thoughts away. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"You don't know huh? You're going to get in trouble."

"Good morning to you too, Dustin."

"Alright lovebird." Dustin said sitting on the chair. "you saw that Andy Sanders called a meeting to sell his company and we need to create a plan to win the dispute."

"Really? This company is already ours Dustin. The other CEO doesn't have any chance." Mike chuckled.

"Do not laugh, man. Female bosses are scarier and more determined than male bosses," Dustin said

Mike rolled his eyes. "Okaaaay, whatever. Let's start."

So he started his work.

2. The Meeting

Notes for the Chapter:

Here we go!

The alarm clock rang and Jane groaned.

Just more few minutes ... wait

"Oh my god," she screamed, scrambling up from the floor and running to take a shower.

Since she moved, she tried to eat healthy but today was a special day. Who could resist Triple Decker Eggo Extravaganza?

Looking out of her window, she was thinking about how much her life has changed. Now she's a grown woman, independent with a great job. Six months ago, she became CEO of Brenner Technologies. The old one Martin Brenner almost went bankrupt, so her intelligence and creativity made the company grows. She was proud of herself. Her idea of life was very different when she was 16 years old. She would probably be at some job in Hawkins with her old friends and married to Mike.

Mike.

So many plans and dreams destroyed after that night. They never fought like that. She remembered every detail. The loud voices, tears, words that shouldn't have been said and the end. His father had accepted his transfer to Chicago and then they left. Without looking back. She grew up, graduated and showed that she was more than a pretty face.

But nothing is perfect.

----- 1 month ago

"El! Dinner!"

"Coming dad"

She was quiet. Jim knew something happened. Since she was promoted, dinner time was her favorite time to talk about her day at work. She spoke happily about her achievements. It was impossible for Jim not to feel happy for her. It was her dream come true and he couldn't be more proud.

"Are you okay?"

"Hmm?"

"Hey kid, what happened?"

She looks at him

"Sorry... today was the meeting with the company partners. And even with all the progress we've made we still need to improve the company's image in the technology market."

"So?"

"There's a company, Sanders Inc. It's being sold, they think we should buy and improve Brenner Technologies, but there's a problem, I'd have to move for another city."

Jim sighed.

In Chicago it was just him and El. He dated a few times and she got some friends but wasn't the same. But if it was the best for El and the company, he would be happy for her.

"That's good, isn't?"

She breathed. "Yeah but the company stays in Hawkins and I'm going to live there again."

Oh Hawkins.

He remembered the city. He was reluctant to accept the transfer proposal, El had her friends and as much as he didn't like to admit, he liked the kids too. And Joyce. But there was one night that El arrived crying at home and said she wanted to leave, he accepted and the next day, early, they left. He tried to ask El what happened that night, but she didn't want to speak. He deduced that something happened between her and the Wheeler kid but didn't ask more. He kept in touch with Joyce, her son Will was now a painter so when he had an exhibit in Chicago, El and him went see.

"You know, I'm scared. It's been so long since we got out of there and I don't know how things will work when I get there. And have you. I don't want to leave you here alone."

Jim laughs. "Kid look, I'll be fine and who knows, I can transfer me back to Hawkins huh?"

"Okay" El breathes.

It's time to go back.

And there she was. Her move was quick, she found a good apartment and after a lot of hugs and advice not to eat only Eggos she was back in Hawkins.

Alone.

No one knew she was back, not even Will, who she still talk sometimes. It was better this way. She knew that Will was still Mike's friend and she didn't want to make a fuss.

She drank her coffee and smiled.

Well, until today.

Today she will be presented as CEO of Brenner Technologies. The possible buyer of Sanders Inc. But her enemy was the W&H

Enterprises. Or better saying the company of Mike Wheeler and Dustin Henderson. *Yes, she knew.*

After a panic attack and a lot of "breathe El" when she discovered she thought about not getting involved in it, but she was an adult and someday she would have to deal with the past.

It didn't stop her feeling anxiety. Fuck, what would she do??

She spent many sleepless nights, examining her speech and trying to control her emotions. But nothing worked

"You'll be fine, El. It's just your ex boyfriend! and also Dustin." Oh Dustin, she missed him so much. Well, she hopes he feels the same.

"Oh my god" she moaned.

Why did it have to be so difficult? why it had to be their company? were there no other companies?? Ugh

Maybe fate is playing with her.

The good thing is he didn't know the name behind the Brenner Technologies. She provided only her position. A woman CEO and her grad.

"Ok El Hopper, dont freak out! It's just a meeting." She said looking in the mirror. Unlike internal feelings, she looked fine. 10 years have passed. Her hair grew. Now it was curling waves falling on her shoulder. The big brown eyes are still the same but now she had curves. From her breasts to her hips. She might not have a lot of stature but nothing that a good pair of high heels doesn't solve. Her dress was going to the middle of her thighs, a little makeup and that was it.

"It's going to be all right" *Could she run with those shoes if she gets scared?*

She breathed deeply.

"Today is the day!" Dustin said already in Mike's office. "I'm so excited! How will the other buyer be?"

"Calm Down, big boy, it's just a meeting, we're not going to fight with swords or anything with her." Mike looked calm but he was not feeling that way.

He barely slept at night. He had this feeling that something would happen but did not know what it was. *What is wrong with him?* He pushed the thoughts away when Jennifer came in his office and told him it was time for him to leave for the meeting.

Walking into the meeting room Dustin straightened his suit, *god he hates it.* "So what's the deal with the new CEO?"

"I don't really know. Jennifer gave me the details." he opened the folder and started reading. "Well, She's a woman . it says she is 26... graduated from Chicago University... e now is CEO of Brenner Technologies... I bet she'll have glasses, a turtle neck and a long purple skirt" he said jokingly.

When they arrived, Mike and Dustin greeted everyone. Andy Sanders was already there.

Less than a minute later, they heard a pair of heels on the floor and Mike glanced in that direction. He couldn't see her face yet as she had just passed him by but he could see her back and lower back and... she looked good from behind. Her hair was in curling waves falling on her shoulder. She was wearing a purple dress with black heels. She wasn't looked tall.

The moment she reached the other end of the table where the screen

was, she turned around to face them and Mike's jaw dropped.

HOLY SHIT.

"Hi. My name is Jane Hopper" she said smiling. "CEO of Brenner Technologies."

Mike's world stopped.

As they started introducing themselves one by one, Mike's nervousness increased so much that he could feel his face turn red. *Shit. Shit. Shit.*

"Andy Sanders, CEO of Sanders Inc. Pleasure to meet you."

He couldn't see Dustin but he knew he was as shocked as Mike. "*oh my god... D-Dustin Henderson, W&H Enterprises l-lady.*"

She smiled at him and moved her eyes on Mike. And he could see recognition struck her. Her eyes opened wider, her mouth slightly formed the shape of an 'O'. And then there was anger and grudge in her eyes. If he didn't know better, he'd think he saw a spark in her eyes. The kind she had on their night when they fight. Ten years ago... He would never admit it, but he remembered that night clear as day.

"M-Mik-Michael Wheeler, CEO of W&h Enterprises" he cleared his voice, trying to sound powerful and manly.

"Pleasure ..." she said giving him the fakest smile in the history of fake smiles. And then he saw the devilish spark in her eyes for real. As if she was telling him something, challenging him ...

In that moment Mike Wheeler realised he really was fucked. This

woman stood there in front of him, strong, determined and by the look of it... she was going to put him through hell. What was weird was the fact that he wanted to play her game. He knew she'd turn his life into a nightmare, but he was looking forward to it.

'Well, at least you were right about the purple color" Dustin whispered in his ear causing Mike to chuckle nervously.

FUCK.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thank you so, so much to everyone who takes the time to leave a review and kudos! It means a lot to me!

let the games begin! who do you think will win? Xx

3. Dinner

Notes for the Chapter:

Hello! I really enjoyed writing this chapter! If there are any mistakes, my apologies :)

I can't believe! Where have you been? "Dustin said hugging her one more time "Oh my god El, you're a CEO!"

She smiled. "I missed you Dustin"

"Me too! So much happened! The others will go crazy when they find out you're here."

Mike was leaning against his desk with his arms crossed, watching the scene without believing it too. The meeting was over and honestly he did not remember anything. All he did was stare at her and try to discover her new details. How big was her hair now, the way she spoke firmly or when she caught him staring at her. But some things hadn't changed. She still puts her hair behind her ear when she gets nervous. He could say something only when he was asked, glad that Dustin was there because otherwise the meeting would have been a failure for them. Andy Sanders said he was going to study the two companies and then set up a meeting to set the winner. Sincerely Mike isn't caring about it now, *not* with his ex girlfriend standing in front of him. His thoughts were interrupted when 3 people entered his room at once.

"Where's the best businessman in the city .. *holy shit El????*

"Hey guys" El said nervously to her old friends.

"OMG EL!!" Max was the first to jump in a hug "I missed you so much!

"Hey mage, where have you been?" Lucas then a long hug.

"Wow, El, why didn't you tell me you were in Hawkins?" Will said after hugging her too.

"Well, I moved a short time ago. I did not have much time."

Wait, Lucas thought. "You moved? You mean..."

"Guys, El is the CEO of Brenner Technologies!! Cool, right???"
.WHAT.

"Oh my god El this is so cool!! Let's have dinner tonight! Everyone, like old times! There's so much we can talk about, so much has happened ... "Max said thinking about what she would do for dinner.

Wait ... Mike who was strangely silent spoke for the first time. "What? Dinner?" Everyone looked at him.

Of course! Why not? Max said not caring about his shocked friend. "Would you like to know my house El?? Me and Lucas are living together but we have not got married yet...." Max babbled out of sight with El.

After a moment, Lucas was the first to speak. "Hey buddy, are you okay?"

"Okay? Do I look like? It's just my ex-girlfriend who hates me appeared here and wants to take a company from me." Mike said sighing loudly.

"Mike, calm down. It's not the end of the world..." Will tried to calm

his friend.

"Wait Will, you asked her why she didn't call you. Did you know about her ??? Mike said instantly.

"Well... Mike.... Look..."

Lucas and Dustin stepped back. "Oh boy, this is not good"

"I CAN'T BELIEVE! You knew all the time where she was and didn't tell me!

"Look, this is a long story ... after that fight, she was so upset and she left and didn't want to go back. My mother calls Jim sometimes and then I talk to El too. She didn't want anyone to know. Will signed. "I tried okay? I tried to talk to her about you two but she didn't want to. Anyways, after a while I gave up, she asked about the others but that was it."

"Oh my God, this is a nightmare." Mike groaned putting his hands through his hair. "Is this dinner really necessary, Lucas?"

Lucas looked at his friend. "You know Max, she will not stop."

Dustin tried to console him. "It's going to be all right Mike, it's not like she's going to use a table knife on your neck."

"Yeah, don't worry Mike" Will said.

He wanted to believe in his friends.

As soon as Mike was left alone, his secretary Jennifer came into his office talking about the agenda for the day. He wasn't paying much attention until he felt two hands on his shoulders.

"...you are very tense sir, let me help you." When he saw her she was already sitting on his lap.

"Look... Jennifer...."

Someone coughed. "Ummm, Excuse me"

Jennifer almost fell on the floor when Mike got up quickly. *shit*

"El! S-sorry, it's not what y-you think..."

"For you it's Jane. I left a folder here and came back to pick it up. Don't worry, you can continue whatever you are doing" She growled. "I don't want to bother you," El said across the room stepping hard.

He saw Jennifer coming out discreetly.

"Umm, are you going to Max's dinner tonight?" Mike tried to get closer but she was already leaving the office.

"Yes. Looks like we'll see us there. *Unfortunately*" he heard her whispering.

"Okay, see you... I guess" he said but she already left. *Well done Mike*

She was looking at her closet for 10 minutes waiting for some magic happen. Her bedroom is a mess with clothes scattered everywhere. She tried to wear something but nothing she wore seemed good on her. El sighed and picked up her phone. Her day had been long and she needed to talk to someone. Jim answered the phone quickly.

"hey sweetie, how was your first day?"

"Horrible," El groaned. "I was so nervous, Dustin was cool but Mike was there staring at me like I had two heads or something. Andy Sanders will give the final verdict in a few days but I don't know... I don't know if I can win. Well, I saw the others too, Max invited me for a dinner at her house tonight. She and lucas are dating"

"Oh really? I thought they'd never take courage. But I'm glad they did." Jim laughed "Mike was there, huh? How did you feel?"

"I-I don't know. *Ugh*. He's the same but he isn't the same if you know

what I mean." She said remembering the scene today. "But isn't matter now. The past is gone."

"If you say... well, everything will be alright. Don't worry kid. And send to Joyce a kiss from me, okay?"

"Joyce huh?" She chuckled. "I bet she misses you too, big boy."

"Oh shut up and go to dinner with your ex boyfriend, okay? Good night sweetie.

"Good night dad."

After much insistence she found a floral dress at the bottom of her closet. She straightened her hair and grabbed her purse.

"Don't do anything stupid El Hopper."

The building where Lucas and Max live is in a neighborhood that is a bit outside the city center. There were other buildings and houses around. She knew Hawkins enough not to get lost. When the elevator went up, El didn't stop thinking about how happy she was for her friends. She didn't realize she was shaking when rang the bell.

"Coming." She listened and a smiling Lucas opened the door. "El, welcome! Come in!

She was surprised when she get inside. The apartment was big and looked cozy. It was colorful and had a large window that allowed to see the whole city. A lot of trophies were on shelves decorating a walls. You could see Max's details everywhere. Dustin and Will were already there playing something on TV.

"Hi guys"

"HEY EL" they said too concentrated to look at her. "No, no, no .. I can't believe you're losing Will! that's not how I taught you." Lucas said sitting among boys.

El!! Mi casa es su casa! Max said hugging her. "The food is almost

ready, you want water, wine or juice???"

"umm wine please, you want help?"

"Sure, let's leave the nerds here. We have a lot to talk!" She said.

Max didn't ask why El was gone. When they left Mike's office, they talked and she swore she would tell the reason at a later time when they were alone. For El was important to Max understood that even distance she still El's best friend. She agreed and so now they were talking about college and jobs.

"I can't believe you're a doctor! El said helping with the dessert. "This is so cool!"

"Yeah, I'm a surgeon and I always get some emergency call. I love what I do but it's exhausting too. When surgery doesn't work and the patient dies I usually have to give the news to the family, it's the worst part. But nothing compares when everything goes well and the patient is discharged. it's a blessing. Max spoke while drying the dishes.

"I can even imagine, my work with computers and technological stuff is a bit easier. But there are times when all I want is to throw everything out the window and sleep forever. When I became CEO, the company was almost bankrupt. It was difficult at first, I had to show my potential and raise the company from the start again. Now I'm here. Disputing Sanders Inc with my ex boyfriend being my enemy. Funny, isn't?"

Max laughs. "Oh El, I love you both so I can't cheer just for one."

El looked offended. "bitch I'm your best friend and ..." But El was interrupted by the bell

"Must be Mike!" Lucas said already opening the door. "Told ya, hey buddy!"

Dinner was going well, the food was delicious and the conversation

between them was quiet so far. Mike and El didn't talk or look at each other, everyone had noticed the tense atmosphere between them except Dustin, who kept talking.

"..so Mike and I went back to Hawkins and founded W & H Enterprises" He said with his mouth full of food. "It was not easy at first. There were many meetings and was getting so messy, so Jennifer appeared and offered to be our secretary. She is very efficient." He said looking straight at Mike who was choking on food.

"I can imagine how much" El said sarcastically taking another sip of wine. "Umm, Will? I spoke to my father on the phone and he sent Joyce a kiss. You know, I think he misses her" EL smiled.

"Oh yes? My mother talks a lot about Jim. Jonathan still believes Jopper will happen." Will sharing the smile.

"*Well, at least Jim cares to send news even from afar ...*" Mike said whispering but enough for everyone to hear.

El coughed. "Excuse me???"

"Alright" Max said louder than necessary, "honey, tell us about your basketball season yeah?"

"Yes! Lucas cleared his throat. "So El, as you know I play for Hawkins Dragons. We are doing a great campaign this year and the chances of winning the championship again are high. I'd like a lot and if you want to, *of course*, watch to the games that will happen in Hawkins. Max watches all the games but I think she misses a woman friend in the midst of so many mens."

"Yeah! You know, sometimes it's too much testosterone for me to handle alone. If you want to go, it will be so cool!" Max looked at El with her puppy eyes that was impossible to say no.

Dustin looked offended "Hey we're cool, right Mike? But Mike was looking directly at El. She avoided looking at him.

"Of course I do. I'm going to have plenty of time since I live here now. It will be cool!"

Mike took a deep breath. *It would be easier for her to stick a knife in his throat, right?* he shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"Okay, dessert time! Mike, could you help me?" Max said without letting him say no. But he can not avoid a "What the hell Max ??"
When he felt a slap on his head.

"What the hell ?? You tell me Mike! What the hell do you think you're doing? She said angrily as she picked up the dishes in the kitchen.

Mike shrugged in annoyance. "I don't know what you're talking about"

"You don't know? How about you being an ass with El today? What is your problem??"

Mike sighed and stared at Max. "It's not my fault! It seems like everything she does is annoying me or something, she's been ignoring me since the meeting...it's just ... she hates me and I hate her okay? We are fighting for a company, you forgot? We can't be friends anymore."

"C'mon Mike, that's not ... " she was interrupted

"Max? Is everything okay?" El appeared looking at the two who looked like two UFC fighters. "You were late and Lucas thought I'd better find out." She ignores Mike purposely. *UGH*

"Yes El, we're going." The girl nodded and went back into the living room.

"Just be cool Michael Wheeler! Are you listening to me?" Max left with dessert and Mike heard Dustin yell "chocolate pudding!"

whatever.

The rest of the night didn't have any more problems. The conversation was kept and drunk Dustin managed to break the tense mood. Gradually they left. Mike was the last.

Lucas sighed as he closed the door. "Next time we'll keep all the knives, deal?"

Max nodded. "Deal"

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey! Do y'all like long chapters? Let's find out who won the dispute in the next chapter! Be prepared. Xx

4. Unresolved Issues

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey! I finally managed to plan the whole fic and this will have a total of 19 chapters. I'm so excited about it! Enjoy the chapter :)

El woke up before the alarm went off. It was a Wednesday, the sun was shining outside. Some people were walking around smiling, others practicing exercise. She wished it was her but it wasn't possible.

She is late. *Very late*

Today was the important day, everything she was working on would be rewarded. She hoped. But she didn't have to do everything herself. Ben was more than an assistant to El, he was his friend when everything seemed lost in Chicago. He backed her up when she just wanted to cry for Mike or when she felt alone. Even though I didn't know him, Ben was Mike's 1st fan, always saying that fate would join Mike, El laughed, "*this isn't going to happen*" she said. It was always like this, they went to Starbucks, asked for coffee and a chocolate muffin and sat for hours talking about loves, friends, jobs, family, everything. When she became CEO, she didn't think twice before calling Ben to be her assistant.

So, there they were, in a starbucks, with the same coffee and muffin, late. In Hawkins.

"Thank you so much for coming here with me. I don't know what I would do without you." El said with a purse in one hand and trying to balance the food in another hand.

"Do you really think I would leave you alone in a fight? And still miss the chance to meet the famous Mike Wheeler? No way, Jane!" He was hurrying along with her. "And my life in Chicago was boring too."

They got in the car and left quickly. With so much going on she was

beginning to miss the boring life in Chicago.

Mike was late. *Shit!* After dinner with his family, Roy, his stepfather had called him to join him with whiskey and relax a bit. After 3 glasses he accidentally fell asleep on the couch. Jennifer call him and woke him up in a hurry, saying he was late. Mike jumped and saying a hurried "*bye mom*" he went out to his apartment. Arriving he picked up a new suit and went straight to the bathroom to correct himself quickly and ran into the parking lot. He got his BMW and drove away. He was driving very fast, ignoring any speed limits, but he didn't even think about it.

All he could think about was how El was probably charming their potential sellers. He had prepared a speech for what he was going to say, to make them sell the company to him. He had ideas and plans... and he had overslept. *Fuck!* As much as he hated it, he had to admit that El was a smart girl herself and she probably had her own plans and ideas. Him being late, would give her more time to talk to the current owners in private.

He arrived at Sanders Inc 35 minutes late and parked quickly. Just as he reached the elevator, he saw El and other guy that don't knows yet. Mike frowned. She was nervously tapping her foot and the other guy was as pale as sheet standing two feet away from her.

YES! So she was late too.

Mike reached her and took a deep breath to let her acknowledge his presence. She looked up at him and her eyes widened.

"What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be at the meeting already?"

"Aren't you?" he answered grinning at her to which she rolled her eyes.

An embarrassing silence filled the air while they were waiting for the elevator. The only sound was the boy's fingers tapping on his tablet. He looked at Mike with wide eyes.

It was a bit of fear in his eyes? Did Mike looked so intimidating? good to know

He cleared his throat and tried to sound as seriously as possible.

"So, did you bring a friend to wipe your tears when you know you haven't won?"

El looked at him like he was stupid. "The only tears that will fall will be yours if you don't shut up, and yes, he is my friend but also my assistant. Ben came from Chicago to work with me in Hawkins."

The elevator doors opened up and Mike and El rushed into it pushing each other.

"Get out of my way!" he hissed at her.

"I don't have time for your bullshit, Wheeler!" she growled back. "I've got a company to win."

"Did a fortune-teller tell you that or did you read it in your horoscope?"

"Well, I can see time has changed you" She paused before she added: "Trying to make funny?"

He shrugged "But it has changed you... you're more uglier." He said and grinned at her. he knew he didn't mean it but, *god*, he loved making her angry. Seeing the change in her expression, made him satisfied with himself.

Ben watched the scene with a smile.

Just as she was about to answer back, the doors open and six more people went in. Suddenly, the elevator got a little too small. Mike was pushed into the wall, with El's back pushed into his front. Ben was right next to him and the people that had arrived were talking loudly and gesturing animatedly.

Mike could feel a warmth that he was sure it was not coming from the elevator people. El was almost leaning over him. Mike couldn't think too much, not with feeling her ass pressed into his thighs, her shoulders rubbing his chest, it wasn't helping. He took a deep breath and could feel her perfume. It was the same perfume that she used when she was young. Vanilla and roses. A wave of nostalgia got him. He loved that smell and she knew it. *Well, if he could get closer to feel more...*

"What do you think you're doing?" he heard her whispering, while her body stilled.

He quickly pulled away and pressed himself more into the wall to distance himself from her. Not that it was possible in this stuffed elevator. The doors opened and half of the people left. Now that there was more space she stepped closer to Ben and he moved to the other side of the elevator. He quickly glanced at her direction and saw her trying to calm her breathing while smoothing out her hair.

Mike shook his head trying to forget her perfume.

They reached the 20th floor and quickly got out of the elevator. The three of them rushed to the conference room where the board and sellers were waiting visibly irritated.

~~~~~

Mike had been sitting nervously for two hours, tapping his fingers on his thighs. Dustin was there too and trying his best to calm him down. The meeting went just as he had supposed it would. He was supporting the statement that he would do a better job running the company, while she was doing the opposite. That went on for an hour. So they were asked to wait for a while, so that the board would make their final decision. *Two hours! It's been two fucking hours!* He growled and leaned back into the sofa just outside the conference room.

'Where did El go?' Dustin asked.

"I don't really give a fuck about her." Mike answered. He sighed and spoke again. "She went to have lunch with her assistant."



"Why didn't you go with them?"

Mike gave him a look that said "Seriously Dustin?".

"Look, Mike, I know you two had problems in the past. But y'all need to fix this. You both can be friends, she remains the same nice person. I mean, how can you not see it?"

Oh, he could see it. He knew her better than anyone. He had spent the best days with her. It was a childhood love he would never overcome. He had shared things about himself and so had she and they had bonded. His family loved her and also her family loved him. He had a connection with her, a connection he hadn't felt with anyone. And he was certain that she had felt the same way. In the midst of all of his family problems, he had met her and it was the best thing that happened to him. They grew up together and he felt happy. *complete*. And the first night they spent together, the way she had been looking at him that night, the spark in her eyes, he had felt like he could do anything... but bad things happened. So, yeah, he knew she was a nice person. Just not towards him anymore. It was something he had to remind himself of everyday.

---

El was trying to have lunch in peace but it was impossible when you have a crazy Ben talking all the time.

"Oh my god El! I can't believe! When you told me he was handsome I couldn't imagine how much! That black hair with the suit... I almost fainted!"

El can't help laughing. But she'd felt the same when she walked into the room and saw him.

He'd grown up more, *if that were possible*, but he wasn't the same skinny boy. He was tall but by the suit she could see that he was

practicing some exercise, nothing to the point of being those big men with big muscles but enough to be balanced with his height. His jaw deepened, the same with his voice. He still had the freckles. The freckles she loved so much. Look at them was like looking at a sky full of stars. His hair was shorter and curlier than she remembers. He was still clumsy, especially when he became nervous. It was a mixture of a man and the boy she remembered that made her sigh. The boy who taught her how to ride a bike when everyone said she was too old for that. He who wiped away all her tears when she felt sad. Who ate Eggos with her while doing their homework. He was still Mike but not *HER* Mike. Not more.

She ate another piece of her dessert, pushing away thoughts.

".... now I ship him with me. If you don't mind, of course." Ben laughed when she looks serious at him.

"Don't start with that."

"Okaay, jealous girl, he's all yours, don't worry. But if you want to gets another crush for me as handsome as Mike, I'd appreciate it."

"He's not mine and you know it. Also I have a friend who is gay too but he is already committed. I bet Hawkins must have other guys just waiting for you". She winked at him.

"Oh, I guess .. but I need someone to fight just like you two. He chuckled. "Seriously, seeing y'all fight is better than watching my aunt's old novels. This has so much drama and tense love ... I almost got a popcorn to watch."

She choked on her wine. "Okay, I'm almost regretting to bring you with me to this city. Now stop talking nonsense! We have a company to win!"

They got up and she went to pay the bill.

"Yes, my lady! But back to the subject about crush, you have to be my cupid! oh, look! What do you think about that one in the red shirt..."

They left the restaurant going straight to the company.

---

A couple of minutes later, El and her assistant walked into the hall. She initiated a talk with Dustin, while Ben sat on the sofa, next to Mike.

"Mr. Wheeler? Mr. Henderson? Ms. Hopper? Please, welcome back to the conference room." A voice called them.

Mike felt his stomach tighten, while his heart started pounding faster in his chest. He followed El back in the room, along with Dustin and Ben, and took a seat across her.

"Thank you both, again, for your interest in our company" Andy Sanders started. "And our sincere apology for making you wait for so long for an answer."

Mike rubbed his already sweaty palms together before wiping them on his pants. He looked at El who was looking calm. But he knew her better and he saw how she tucked her hair behind her ear. Ben was holding the tablet to his chest, anticipation written on his face. When he met Dustin's gaze, he saw his friend smiling reassuring at him, his eyes telling him it was going to be okay. Mike returned the gesture and brought his attention back to the man speaking.

"After an extremely heavy debate, which lasted for over 2 hours, we have finally made a decision. Let me start by saying, that our board is certain that, you two, are the best people to make business with. Mr. Wheeler, your company has endless financial resources- something that could be very beneficial in the rise of Sanders Inc." Mike took a quick glance at El's direction only to see her stiffen in her seat, visibly uncomfortable.

*Good!*

"Ms. Hopper your charisma and ability to do business is just so natural and unique!" Mike let out a quiet 'pfft' under his breath.

Unique, his ass.

"We have choose who will be the best for Sanders. From it's founding to present days Sanders Inc has always had a great CEO ahead of it."

'Except for your last one,' Ben said with an amused tone. 'I mean, are you selling the company because you're getting so much old, right?'

Everybody looked at the man who had been quiet till now. Mike noticed El shooting him a quick 'WTF-Ben-Shut-up' look.

Andy cleared his throat.

"It's about time it was run by two magnificent CEOs" the man in front them continued. Mike stood still, his eyes finding El's. *What did that mean?*

"This means, both W&H Interprises and Brenner Tecnologies, will get 50% of the stocks each. You, Miss Hopper and Mister Wheeler, will work together, side by side, for the well-being of this company. Congratulations!" The man finished off with a small smile.

***wait***

Mike didn't understand. *What? This can't happen, can it?*

The shock was shared with everyone in the room judging by their reactions. He glanced at Dustin who looked just as surprised. Ben's mouth had fallen open slightly and El... oh, no! She was looking as if she wanted to kill someone. Oh, boy...

"Mr. Sanders, I'm sorry but I don't understand" she started as she chuckled humorlessly. "Not that I doubt or oppose your decision, or anything, but with all due respect, Mister Wheeler is not suitable for this position."

'Who said?!' Mike couldn't hold it in. He had had enough of her shit. "You? Who do you think you are?"

"Mike.... " he hearded Dustin in somewhere.

'I am someone who has worked very hard to get to where I am" she

raised her voice with every word. "I actually worked my ass off, day and night. I've been paying for everything with money I've earned. I received a bankrupt company! I know dustin, but you? who received so much help from your secretary, right?"

"You don't know a damn thing, Hopper" He gritted his teeth.

"Oh, no. YOU don't know a damn thing, Wheeler" she said emphasizing on his name and turned to the sellers, who were looking rather uncomfortable. "Look, I am the best choice you have here. I know how this business works. I know what sells on the market and what don't. I know what to do for this company's growth, simply because I care about people and consider what they say."

**"OH! SO IT'S ABOUT THAT? ARE YOU TRYING TO PUNISH ME FOR CHOOSING A COLLEGE AWAY AND NOT INSISTING ON OUR RELATIONSHIP?"** Mike said raising his voice.

*Fuck*

He had never said the reason they broke up, his friends had insisted but he said to forget about it, knowing her, she probably hadn't talked about it either. Now he accidentally told to the Sanders Inc, Dustin and, well, to the whole city basically.

An awkward silence filled the air. No one from the board said a word, instead they just tried to pretend they weren't there, as if they were invisible. Dustin's eyebrows were furrowed in disbelief and question. Ben's mouth formed a perfect 'O' while he looked at El. And El... if looks could kill Mike would've been a dead man already. Embarrassment written all over her face, her eyes filled with anger and hatred.

"Listen here, you assho-", she growled at him but got interrupted.

"Enough!" Mr. Sanders stopped them. "Our decision is final. Sanders Inc needs both companies. We won't succeed with just one. We need the brilliant ideas that Miss Hopper has presented and the financial support Mr. Wheeler can provide. if you can't solve your personal problems separately, then we're really sorry, but neither of you will get the company. We might have to turn to another company or..."

"NO!" both El and Mike said at the same time. They looked at each other for a long moment.

Mike couldn't read her expression. It was a mixture of rage, defeat, acceptance, irritation. He was about to tell the board that he's leaving, when...

"We'll do it" she swallowed.

Mike looked at her again with incredulity. Were they really going to put their issues aside in order to achieve something bigger? Would she forgive him for the things he'd done? Would he forgive her for the things she'd done?

Mr. Sanders looked at him in question, expecting an answer. Mike cleared his throat.

"Y-yes, we... um... we'll do it together."

Half an hour later everything was finalized, all the documents were signed and Sanders was transferred to W&H Enterprises and Brenner Technologies. Nobody looked into each other eyes.

"Done! the announcement dinner will happen on Saturday, it's a formal event with all the city's investors. I suppose you will change the name of your company, right Mrs. Hopper? Let's announce that too. Until then I hope you both solve your problems. See y'all there" Andy took the papers and left.

The air in the elevator, while they were going down, was filled with tension. Mike was in one corner, El in the other. Ben and Dustin were used as human shields separating them from each other.

"So..., Ben said. 'Congratulations to both of you!'"

Mike saw El side-eyeing him. She rolled her eyes. Dustin avoiding a fight spoke first. "So, I think you're my co-worker too" He said opening his arms to a bear hug. "I'm happy for this El, we're going to do great things together."

She returning the hug with a grateful smile. "Thank you Dustin, I think that too."

Well, if she didn't kill Mike first.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

That's it! Things started to get interesting huh?! I really love when you leave comments and kudos. Any suggestions for the new name of El's company? Let me know what you think. Xx

## 5. So far Away

### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for the mistakes but this chapter really take my ass off.

After the decision was come out in the newspapers, things got crazy. Journalists wanting interviews and paparazzi over there, whoa, El's life was completely crazy. Sanders Inc became the headquarters of Mike and El's businesses, she finally finished unpacking her new apartment and being able to bring everything she needed from Chicago to work at Hawkins and change the name of the company. She didn't know if she could do it without the help of her friends. El felt sorry for Ben, he did the impossible to organize the dinner. Sometimes she heard he screams on the phone with someone. She knew most of the time was Jennifer. *it's what she deserves-*

Jim was the first to know about the news. He called out congratulating her while laughing at her saying that she will have to look at the ex-boyfriend's face every day. After many taunts he assured her that he wouldn't miss the dinner. The reaction of her friends wasn't much different. Will wished good luck while Lucas laughed saying that he loves his friends but he knew that Mike and El would try to kill themselves at the first opportunity. Max was most excited saying it would be a great opportunity to fix things between them.

El don't think so. Max didnt listen, *well*, she also wasn't listening now while they are walking in the mall.

"Look at this! Here must have the perfect dress for you! Max said while she entered in the boutique. El groaned. She already lost count of how many stores they entered today. It was a sunny friday, dinner was tomorrow and when El said she don't have a dress Max lose her shit and then there they were.

"Ooh, this is beautiful!"

"Max, you say that to all the dresses we saw today"



"What can I do? They are truly beautiful! Max winked while pushing a dress for El.

"Oh no, don't do this puppy face! I'm tired Max!" El said when her stomach rumbled with hunger. "See? and hungry too! Let's have lunch, okay?"

Stop grumbling sis, just this one okay? and then we'll have lunch. Before El reply she was already in the dressing room again. The tiredness did not let her pay too much attention in the dress until she went out and showed it to Max, who had her mouth open.

"Oh my God El! You look so beautiful!!

El turned to look in the mirror and was surprised. She didn't like any dress she had tried before, but this, wow, was stunning. It was a long beaded black dress with strappy open back and V-neck, wasn't exaggerated. She felt good in it.

"Oh, let's take this one! You'll be the best. Who knows, there's a man you might like, huh? I bet someone will be jealous" Max whispered.

"Okay Max, that's enough" El said coming out of her thoughts "and yes, I'll take this. Max had already chosen her dress, they paid and left for lunch.

"Okay, we got what we needed, we're having lunch .. this is the time we have 'that conversation' don't you think?" El knew what Max was talking about, she was running away from the subject but maybe it was time to talk. She signed.

"Umm, right." She started. "You know, Mike and I were good together. We had a whole story, we went through difficulties, his parents separated, I had my problems but we managed to solve them together. We had many plans, including getting married and having a family. But college and employment were priorities after we finished high school, but was at this time that things started to get out of control. Mike started to get strange, always thoughtful, had days him ignored my calls. I thought it was something I was imagining, remember when I talk to you about it?" Max listened intently as El stopped to drink her juice.

"You told me it could be because of college stuff, I agreed, because we were all worried about the future. But he didn't talk to me anymore, I started getting worried. That's when my father received the proposal to move to Chicago. I wanted to talk to him about it and to know what he thinks. I asked the boys what was going on, but they got away from it saying Mike was normal but I knew he wasn't, so I went to his house determined to solve it. We started talking normally but when I saw we were yelling at each other. It was when he finally said he had been accepted at NYU, he didn't know how to tell me because he didn't know how our relationship would work. I shocked because I wanted to continue but he doesn't" Tears blurred his vision now "So I told him about Chicago, he kind of screwed up and said we were not going to work, the distance was a lot and he wanted to focus on college, so when he finished, we'd go back to dating. I couldn't stand him and I accused him of being selfish, he didn't want to insist on our relationship and it hurts me, I said horrible words and he did it too, anyways, you know the rest of the story." She said wiping her eyes with tears.

Max hugged his friend. "Don't cry El, I can imagine how horrible it was for you both." She went back to her seat. "These things hurts but I know deep down you love each other, if only you would talk ...

El denied it. "I don't think so, no matter how hard I try the past always speaks louder and then we'll fight again."

"El .. please ..."

"No, we're good this way. She said with a sigh, "Let's go, tomorrow will be a great day and I need to rest"

"What? No, no, we need to set a schedule in the beauty salon. Makeup, hair, nails ....."

~~~~~

El awoke to the sound of someone knocking at her door, she looked at the clock that showed at 6 a.m, who could it be? She groaned, maybe if she ignored the person would go away...

Knock Knock

Ugh. "Coming" she yelled. It took her some time to get her slippers and reach the door. "Who is it? It's 6 a.m, you know that?" but the person standing in front of her didn't seem bothered.

"Yes I know"

"DAD!" She jumped on him. "What? I thought you'd come only later." They went inside, pushing their suitcases.

"Yes but I thought about making a surprise for you. How are you sweetie? I missed you!" He gave her another hug "by the way, your place is very cool.

"I missed you too dad." She said with a smile. "You know, I almost couldn't finish all the boxes. Ben and Max helped me a lot.

"Yeah? How are they?" Speaking of which, I didn't tell Joyce either"

"Oh, I think we have a lot to talk about huh? but first Eggos!

The rest of the morning was quiet, they talked, El showed his neighborhood and explained about the company's purchase. El promised that she would keep his father's secret about joyce if he promised he wasn't going to do anything funny about her and Mike, even though she knew her father would not be able to keep quiet for long. The moment ended with a crazy Ben calling, saying they had a lot to do while complaining about Mike's secretary. *"She's really a bitch"* he said, El couldn't agree more. Soon a crazy Max called and said this is was time to look beautiful for the big night.

It will be a long day.

Mike is sweating, he felt his tie tighten his neck, it was impossible not to stop messing up his tux. He tried to control his anxiety looking at the landscape.

"Man, stop it," Dustin said arranging Mike's tie for the third time. "

Rose looked at the scene with a smile. "Calm down Mike, it'll be

alright."

It was dinner night, Mike was in the car with Dustin and his girlfriend Rose. She is pretty, with long blond hair and green eyes. Dustin met her in college and they were together ever since. She was kind, funny and helped them a lot when they lived in NY. Mike knew she loved Dustin very much since she'd agreed to move to Hawkins with him without even thinking. They made a nice couple, Mike felt a stab in the chest looking at the scene between them.

When they arrived, there was a crowd of paparazzi trying to get their attention for a photo. After a few poses and interviews they finally arrived at the place. Mike was impressed. The whole place was nicely decorated, there were chandeliers scattered across the ceiling. Waiters were serving champagne and there was a buffet and bar in the corner. A band was playing music while some people danced. Mike didn't know most of those people but knew that if they were here, they were important.

"Hey guys!" Will approached with his mother Joyce. "What took so long?"

"Mike didn't know how to choose his clothes. Hi Joyce, how are you?" Dustin gave them a hug.

"Hi honey, you're handsome. By the way, you two look great. Congrats!"

"Thanks Joyce, did you see if anyone else came?" Mike asked curiously hoping no one would know who he was talking about. Will smiled realizing.

"Ummm, no. Lucas said he was on the way but your family just got in, Mike." He pointed to the entrance. Karen approached them along with Roy and Holly. Nancy had called in congratulating her brother but unfortunately she couldn't have this at dinner. Jonathan had a photographer job that night and Connor, their 4-year-old son had a flu. But she promised visit them on Thanksgiving. Dinner continues with many conversations, Lucas and Max arrived but Mike was feeling an uneasiness. Jennifer kept disturbing and surrounding him. But he was almost giving in to her when noticed a movement outside.

Thank God, he thought but then regretted it.

Fuck

He saw Ben come in first, Jim just behind - wtf Jim? He came? But his thoughts were interrupted. Holy Shit. She walked taking all of Mike's breath away. He could see all of her curves in that embroidered dress, her hair was loose in well-made waves and her makeup was perfect. *She is perfect.*

"Do you want a bib, Mike?" He jumped, he hadn't noticed his friends there. "I know, she's stunning, isn't? We spent the whole day getting ready today" Max said smiling "Hey El, here "

"Wait, dont-" Mike tried to say but it was late, he could feel his red ears and his hands sweating while he watched her approaching. But he felt his blood drain when he saw Jim behind her. "um, hi guys!" *Well*, she looked nervous too.

"Hey, you look awesome" Dustin said at first, trying to break the tension. "El, this is my girlfriend Rose. Rose, this is El.

El smiled. "Hi, nice to meet you! Dustin talks a lot about you."

"Yeah? I hoped well. Rose hugged her. "You look very nice."

"Hi, chief! I didn't know you were coming" Lucas said.

"Well, I thought make a susprise. Y'all grown up a lot huh?" Jim greeted them by stopping to look at Mike deeply. "You mainly, how are you Mike?

Mike hoped the floor would open at that moment. "H-hi, sir, J-Jim. I'm fine" he tried not stutter but fail miserably.

Will coughed. "Hey Jim, my mother is here. She'll be happy to know that you came"

"Oh yes, I'll talk to her, see ya." Jim came out with a strange twinkle in his eyes. Before Mike started talking to El, his sister Holly arrived. "Mike! Finally found you. I can't stand listening to my mother, she talks a lot. How can Roy handle it? Hey, I saw a man, he seemed

quite the chief Jim.....

"Holly, take a breath" he laughed.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw El standing, looking curiously at them. Holly followed her eyes, and when she saw the other woman, her eyes widened slightly and then she looked at Mike. He cleared his throat.

"Holly, do you remember E- "

"El, is you? OMG! I missed you!"

El smiled returning the hug. "Holly! Wow, you grown up so much!

"Yes but not as much as Mike, you know." She pointed to her brother. "He talked so much about you but I didn't imagine you were so beautiful"

Mike gasped. "HOLLY!" The smiles of his friends were interrupted by someone speaking into the microphone. Everyone looked.

"Hello everyone." Andy Sanders started talking. "Thank you to everyone who has come to this dinner." As you know, I needed to retire so I decided to sell my company to enjoy the rest of my life with my family. After much thought, I chose the company that would keep my legacy. Or rather, companies. So I am pleased to announce that the winners are H & W Enterprises and Jane Hopper's new company, Eleven Tech." He said raising his glass.

A rain of applause was made as the light focused on the three of them. Dustin, Mike and Eleven received the lengths with a smile on their faces. Winning the sanders inc was a big step even with the disagreements between Mike and El. When the throat dried up after many "thank you" Mike tried to talk to El again when he was interrupted. *Again.*

"Jane Hopper? Hi, my name is Adam Mitchell, owner of Hawkins General Hospital" The man introduced himself. He is tall, with a mouth full of perfect white teeth, his black hair was perfectly tidy and he had a sharp look at El. Mike frowned.

What the hell?

"Hi, I'm Michael Wheeler"

"Hi to you too" The man didn't seem interested. "Congrats for the victory. I'm sure you'll be a great CEO." He said keeping his eyes on El, ignoring Mike completely.

What. the. Hell

She giggled. "Thank you, I'll try my best"

"I'm sure of it. Can I have the honor?" Adam said pointing to the center of the room where some people were dancing slowly.

"Sure" *Wait, was she blushing?* They left, leaving a very upset Mike behind.

WHAT THE HELL.

"Mike! Mike?" Will tried to get his attention. "Are you okay?"

"What? Oh yes, I'm totally fine!" He said taking a glass of champagne and drinking it. "Why wouldn't I be?"

Will understood as he looked into the center of the room and saw an El blushing with a *very handsome* man whispered in her ear. Shit

"Mike ..."

"Hey losers ... Whoa, is El there? With Adam? Holy shit, he's my boss! You go girl!! Max laughed but stopped when Mike looked with a murderous look. "Ummm, I mean .. I thought he had a girlfriend." She coughed.

"Mike buddy, why aren't you dancing with her over there?" Lucas asked taking another cup from Mike's hand.

"Me? Why would I do that? He looked at the scene in disgust. "I hate her, do you remember?" They started arguing when Will had an idea.

"Wait a minute, I ... um ... I need to pee." Will hurried off, crossing

people. No one saw him when he began to whisper something to Andy Sanders.

"Whatever, I don't care." Mike looked at Jennifer who ate him with her eyes, he smiled back and started to leave when Andy spoke again into the microphone.

"Umm, excuse me, but I'd like to offer the next song to the new owners. Please make room for Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Henderson and Mrs. Hopper." Mike's eyes widened, *what?* He saw Dustin looking at him in confirmation while he led Rose to the center of the hall and starting to dance. Mike starts to sweat again. *Would it take time for him to run away?* El exchanged frightened looks with him but nodded to him.

So there they were. Dancing together with everyone looking. Mike put his hand on El's waist carefully expecting some reaction from her, when it seemed okay he continued. They began to dance in the rhythm of slow music, slowly the world outside was quiet and suddenly there was only him and her there. Nostalgia took it, how many times have they already been in that position? The snowball, at high school graduation, at home alone laughing at each other .. whoa, he had not realized missed that until then. He decided to relax.

She tried to break the strange moment. "Sorry about this"

"What? this? No, you don't need..." He avoided her eyes. "It's just a dance, right?" Suddenly Mike remembered the scene of Adam and she danced together, felt his ears turn red.

"Don't worry, I bet Adam will want to dance with you again."

El frowned at his tone. "What?"

"Everyone looked at you dancing. You seemed to like it a lot."

"well" she stammered "he dances well and is a nice guy.... "

"Oh really?" Max said he had a girlfriend" Mike felt El get nervous.

"What? No! He doesn't have a girlfriend! He invited me to visit the

hospital..."

"Visit the hospital? Really Eleven?" Mike didn't avoid the irony in his voice. "You will really go on date with your friend's boss?"

"Listen here," she grunted irritably. "I knew you hated me but I didn't know it was that much. We work together now but that doesn't mean you can intrude on my life. You talking about love life having an affair with the secretary?"

Mike felt his blood boil in his veins. "How dare you? You mess up everything and you think you know something?" Her voice deepened while he pulled El closer to him until there wasn't space between them. "And yes, I hate you" He felt satisfied when he saw the shiver of El.

"Same" She said without breaking the eye contact breathing heavily but the moment was interrupted when applause were heard. The music stopped at some point and they didn't realize it.

El left his arms like if Mike burned. "Excuse me" She said hurriedly pushing people around. He tried to control his breathing and, whoa, Mike really needs a drink.

~~~~~

Mike started to feel tired, the night was long and he needed to rest. He started looking for his friends to say goodbye when he saw his mother heading towards him.

"Honey, we need to go. I am very proud of you! See you later. Holly, say goodbye to your brother!

She didn't seem to want to leave, He laughed at this.

"right, right.. hey, send a kiss to El for me okay? We need to see each other again.. bye mike!

He rolled his eyes, of course he was going to say. In another world

Will and Joyce were the next. "Mike! I found you! Did you know Jim is going to live in Hawkins again?

Mike choked. "What? Really?"

"Yes! it's wonderful, isn't?" A very happy Joyce said.

"Whatever, I just want to say bye. Don't do anything stupid, okay?"

Mike chuckled. "I can't promise, bye Will."

In a corner he saw El and Adam talking excitedly. They didn't take their eyes from each other.

*Fuck this.*

It could be the alcohol but he felt two hands on his shoulders. Of course it's Jennifer. He avoided her all night but looking at El now he can't think much. Drinking the rest of his champagne, he took the hand of a smiling Jennifer and they went out together.

No one had noticed them leaving but El did.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

If anyone is curious, that's how I thought the El's dress:

<https://www.saksfifthavenue.com/main/ProductDetail.jsp?FOLDER%3C>

[%3Efolder\\_id=2534374306418048&PRODUCT%3C](https://www.saksfifthavenue.com/main/ProductDetail.jsp?FOLDER%3C%3Efolder_id=2534374306418048&PRODUCT%3C)

[%3Eprd\\_id=845524447113833&R=628732077291&P\\_name=The](https://www.saksfifthavenue.com/main/ProductDetail.jsp?FOLDER%3C%3Eprd_id=845524447113833&R=628732077291&P_name=The%3C)

Xx